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THESIS

THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOSITY ON MIDSHIPMAN ADJUSTMENT AND FEELINGS OF ACCEPTANCE

by

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June 2006

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13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)

This thesis examines religiosity in the U.S. military and at the U.S. Naval Academy. More specifically, this qualitative study briefly explores whether belief in and practice of religion affects the overall adjustment and experience of midshipmen at the U.S. Naval Academy. Data were collected through focus groups with first and second class midshipmen (seniors and juniors, respectively) in the Classes of 2006 and 2007. Content coding revealed current issues of tolerance, acceptance, diversity, and understanding between midshipmen with differing religious beliefs and the in-group/out-group phenomenon that occurs between the religious majority and minority of the institution. Research into minority and diversity issues are compared to focus group data about minority versus majority religious groups and beliefs. Focus group respondents did not uncover or suggest any serious or egregious affronts to religious tolerance. However, there is anecdotal evidence that biases and prejudices remain especially with regard to atypical or unusual groups. Respondents spoke of racism, homophobia, and specifically, intolerance towards religious minorities. The message of tolerance has not penetrated some emotional reactions and there exists undertones of intolerance regarding certain diversity issues. Recommendations include individual and group counseling and development of a structured diversity and acceptance education curriculum.

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THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOSITY ON MIDSHIPMAN ADJUSTMENT AND FEELINGS OF ACCEPTANCE

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This thesis examines religiosity in the U.S. military and at the U.S. Naval Academy. More specifically, this qualitative study briefly explores whether belief in and practice of religion affects the overall adjustment and experience of midshipmen at the U.S. Naval Academy. Data were collected through focus groups with first and second class midshipmen (seniors and juniors, respectively) in the Classes of 2006 and 2007. Content coding revealed current issues of tolerance, acceptance, diversity, and understanding between midshipmen with differing religious beliefs and the in-group/out-group phenomenon that occurs between the religious majority and minority of the institution. Research into minority and diversity issues are compared to focus group data about minority versus majority religious groups and beliefs. Focus group respondents did not uncover or suggest any serious or egregious affronts to religious tolerance. However, there is anecdotal evidence that biases and prejudices remain especially with regard to atypical or unusual groups. Respondents spoke of racism, homophobia, and specifically, intolerance towards religious minorities. The message of tolerance has not penetrated some emotional reactions and there exists undertones of intolerance regarding certain diversity issues. Recommendations include individual and group counseling and development of a structured diversity and acceptance education curriculum.

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I.   INTRODUCTION

A.   BACKGROUND

Ratified on December 15, 1791, the first line of the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States reads, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof…" (Constitution of the United States, 1991) Both free exercise of religion and the separation of church and state remain fundamental in the U.S. standard of freedom. Practice of religion without concern for reprisal (or negative reactions of any manifestation) and acceptance in a U.S. government institution regardless of religious beliefs or lack of such beliefs are not only necessities for personal success and happiness but rights according to the U.S. Constitution.

In accordance with the Constitution, the policy of the U.S. Naval Academy is to value individual religious freedom and support each individual midshipman's religiosity as a right. Whereas once midshipmen of all faiths were required to march to church services in the historic town of Annapolis (Office of the Chaplain, U.S. Naval Academy), today all recognized faiths have locations for prayer on and off Naval Academy grounds.

However, while policy and programs are relatively easily changed, culture is not. "Culture matters because it is a powerful, latent, and often unconscious set of forces that determine both our individual and collective behavior, ways of perceiving, thought patterns, and values" (Schein, 1999, p. 14). To foster appropriate behavior among midshipmen in keeping with religious tolerance and acceptance, the institution must understand, and if necessary adjust its culture. Tolerance and acceptance of religious diversity mitigates the potential for religion to be an obstacle to adjustment and acceptance within the Brigade of midshipmen. A climate in any government organization must strive to uphold the values of the Constitution's first amendment, support the free exercise of religion, and maintain a separation between church law and institutional policy.

B. PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to explore whether belief in and practice of religion affects the overall adjustment and experience of midshipmen at the U.S. Naval Academy. The degree of reported religious identification and practice or fervor will help define *religiosity* (further defined in the Chapter II). Religious outlets abound at the Naval Academy, including, but not limited to clubs, extra-curricular activities (ECAs), organized prayer, and community events. Although the explicit policy is to respect all religious values, there is a consistently noticeable presence of Judeo-Christian religiosity at the Naval Academy. A goal of this thesis is to give Naval Academy leadership insight into the implications of religiosity for midshipmen.

"Personalities are dynamic continuums, and although it is important to discover their content, organization and performance at a given point in time, it is still more important to discover the processes by which they develop, grow, and change" (Linton, 1945, p. 3). Emphasis on the majority or mainstream religious groups at the U.S. Naval Academy may lead to certain levels of exclusivity within the mainstream whereby inhibiting the military socialization process and the feelings of acceptance by those midshipmen who are not in the mainstream.

This study examines religiosity in the U.S. military and at the U.S. Naval Academy, in light of the recent investigation of religious intolerance at the U.S. Air Force Academy. This thesis includes a qualitative assessment of data collected from focus groups of first and second class midshipmen (seniors and juniors, respectively), observing current issues of tolerance, acceptance, diversity, and understanding between midshipmen with differing religious beliefs and the in-group/out-group phenomenon that occurs between the religious majority and minority of the institution. Research into minority and diversity issues are compared to focus group data about minority versus majority religious groups and beliefs.

The contents include: (1) a review of religions and religious practices at the U.S. Naval Academy, (2) a discussion of the data obtained from qualitative analysis of eight focus groups, and (3) how the focus group data portray the connection between religiosity and its impact on midshipmen adjustment and acceptance. The data used for this thesis

are from actual midshipmen in the Classes of 2006 and 2007. It is assumed that midshipmen in these classes who participated in the focus groups were honest and upfront about their religious preferences and practices in keeping with the Brigade honor treatise that states, "Midshipmen are persons of integrity, they do not lie."

Qualitative methods were used to analyze content from transcriptions of focus group discussion. Eight focus groups were held using semi-structured questioning to promote discussion on religiosity. Transcriptions of all focus group discussions, essays, and other written data were assessed for overarching and repeated themes and content coded with close attention to illustrative examples. Quantitative methods were used to assess a short survey given to each focus group member. Focus groups represented Naval Academy classes of 2006 and 2007, each notable religion (including secularism), religiously practicing and non-practicing male midshipmen, and various races. The definitions used to separate focus groups by religion are as follows: Christian – any midshipman who believes that Jesus Christ is the son of God or God himself and considers him or herself part of a Christian congregation at the U.S. Naval Academy; Non-Christian – any midshipman who is not a Christian as per the previous definition. All focus group members were volunteers conveniently selected from a database indicating religion and other background information provided by the Naval Academy's office of Institutional Research.

C.   BENEFITS AND ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The results of this study will demonstrate the need for understanding personal religion as it relates to mission success in the U.S. military and, more specifically, at the U.S. Naval Academy. Leaders must be astute judges of character and must have the highest level of understanding when it comes to the well being, capabilities, and strictures of the personnel placed under their charge. Research demonstrating the relationship between religious diversity and questions of acceptance and tolerance within the institution will assist in motivating education, morality, and strengthening the Brigade of midshipmen as an academic and social community. Overall, this study seeks to enhance understanding of the primarily personal realm of religiosity and portray its relation to the Brigade's culture. Through understanding a better environment for the midshipmen may be possible.

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I introduces the research topic. Chapter II is the literature review. The literature review explores current published research, popular studies, and topical literary sources in order to develop the thesis topic. Definitions, background information, and research data further understanding of the research topic and help illuminate its importance. Specific topics of the literature review include the following: religiosity in the United States and the U.S. military; diversity of religion in the U.S. military and the U.S. Naval Academy; acceptance and tolerance of differing beliefs; and U.S. Naval Academy religious culture and structure. Chapter III details the methods and data used to answer the research questions. Chapter IV analyzes the focus group and survey data. Chapter V completes and summarizes the study with an overall discussion of findings, recommendations, and suggestions for future research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a brief review of religion and religiosity in the United States (U.S.) and, more specifically, in the U.S. military and at the U.S. Naval Academy. Rights, religious acceptance, tolerance, and adjustment issues are discussed with the focus on topics associated with popular religiosity and status of religious minorities in the U.S. and its military. Additionally, some of the review focuses on minority and gender issues as they may closely relate to religious tolerance and acceptance.

A diverse country, the U.S. has always provided a sanctuary for a diverse selection of religions and personal beliefs for its citizens. The U.S. military and military academies report similar (and in some reports greater) diversity of religions and personal beliefs. This thesis examines the issues surrounding adjustment and feelings of acceptance among select groups of midshipmen at the U.S. Naval Academy – a popular topic in the wake of the Air Force Academy's recent issue concerning religious intolerance and the nation's concern of religion in the public domain.

While religiosity is on the rise, existing academic literature is limited. As Lippy tellingly states, "A few historians have begun to explore the dimensions of popular religion in American life, but the task is just beginning…students of Western religion have only recently become intrigued with [the popular religiosity] phenomenon" (Lippy, 1994, p. 15). Although minority and gender diversity literature is more plentiful and can inform the topics of tolerance and acceptance, literature specifically related to popular religiosity is scarce. Consequently, the literature reviewed for this thesis is relatively broad in order to gather enough information to support the exploration of the topic: The study of acceptance of religious minority groups among the Christian majority at the United States Naval Academy.

B. RELIGIOSITY IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE U.S. MILITARY

> Benjamin Franklin stated that 'religion will be a powerful regulator of our actions, give us peace and tranquility within our minds, and render us benevolent, useful and beneficial to others' (Paul, 2005, p. 3).

One of the most renowned founding fathers, Franklin forecasted a positive influence of religiosity in American society. Likewise, a well known contemporary politician, Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) asserted that "belief in a creator is instrumental to 'secure the moral future of our nation, and raise the quality of life for all our people'" (Paul, 2005, p. 4). Both of these publicly esteemed political figures refer to religiosity as a vital component to the successful future of the nation.

Religiosity is the informal development of belief systems based (sometimes loosely) upon a recognizable religion's foundation. An individual's religiosity, her private beliefs, sometimes referred to as spirituality, is extraordinarily personal and highly variable from person to person making it difficult to study. "Popular religion, folk religion, unofficial religion, invisible religion, common religion, religious populism – all of these terms point to a dimension of religious life that is elusive and difficult to describe. They suggest an aspect of being religious that is distinguished from formal religious belief systems and institutions, but still represents a vital part of being religious" (Lippy, 1994, p. 1). It is that "vital part of being religious" of which Lippy writes that is of paramount interest to the study of midshipmen interaction with respect to different religious values.

Further, religiosity is not solely a belief system, nor is it solely ritual or learned behavior. "Religiosity…takes in both beliefs and practices associated with official religion as well as those that come from other sources, [and] it appreciates individual blends of belief and practice." Religiosity helps create and maintain perspectives that permit people to give life meaning (Lippy, 1994, p. 19). Religiosity may draw people closer together or drive people farther apart; be a source of strength and cohesion, or be a source of intolerance and misunderstanding.

Institutional religiosity is informed by the majority's common religion. The majority's religious values are often evident in an institution's official policy. While the U.S. is officially a secular democracy, it is nearly impossible to avoid artifacts of Christian-American heritage. One needs look no farther than one's pocket to find "popular religiosity." From the dollar, to the pledge of allegiance, to nationally observed holidays, "…popular religiosity is…a constant in American culture" (Lippy, 1994, p. 17).

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Religiosity is fundamental to American culture and develops within the nation just as it does within individuals. "…Popular religion is a constant human phenomenon (Vrijhof, 1979). Religiosity…comes to the fore only because institutional differentiation in Western societies has made religion a discrete and separate component of culture" (Lippy, 1994, p. 6).

In contrast to other western nations the U.S. has maintained popular religiosity as a national interest. "In the twentieth century extensive secularization occurred in Western nations, the United States being the only significant exception…" (Paul, 2005, p. 1) Religion is so ingrained in American culture that religiosity's effects cannot be ignored. Religiosity impacts the nation and it's military in ways that researchers are only beginning to understand, but evidence exists that the U.S. maintains its cultural component of religiosity while other Western nations become ever-increasingly secular. "Large scale surveys show dramatic declines in religiosity in favor of secularization in the developed democracies…the United States is the only prosperous nation where the majority absolutely believes in a creator and evolutionary science is unpopular…" (Paul, 2005, p. 1)

Furthermore, the growth of religious affiliation in American society supports a growing trend of religiosity among Americans. "… [In] 1998 approximately 90% of the American people professed to be religious and 63% (169 million) identified themselves as affiliated with a specific religious group. The number of separate religious denominations has grown in a sixty-year span from about forty-five in 1940 to more than 2,000 at present" (Brinsfield, 1998, p. 401). Different outlets or media with which to practice personal beliefs have grown exponentially over the past fifty years. Significant growth of religious diversity and religious media support the growing nature of popular religiosity in the United States.

Spirituality is an important part of adult development, especially within institutions of higher learning. Therefore, the development of religiosity is central to personal growth and a fundamental part of American culture. "[At] the heart of American popular religiosity there has always been a lively sense…to find meaning and purpose in life…through fusing together an array of beliefs and practices to construct

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personal and very private worlds of meaning" (Lippy, 1994, p. 19). Brinsfield's statement bolsters the ideal of U.S. religiosity when he writes, "…national strength lies only in the hearts and spirits of men" (Brinsfield, 1998, p. 397).

American's are often religiously motivated as many admit religion as an integral part of life. "In America, many individuals report that religion and spirituality are integral parts of their lives. As many as 95% of American adults express a belief in God, 84% believe God can be reached through prayer, and 86% state religion is important or very important to them" (Brinsfield, 1998, p. 405). With over 90% of Americans reporting belief in some sort of deity, religiosity's impact on American society should not be ignored. More data supports the level of religiosity in the U.S. "According to a recently released survey, 'Religious devotion sets the United States apart from some of its closest allies. Nearly all U.S. respondents said faith is important to them and only 2% said they do not believe in God'" (Headquarters, United States Air Force, 2005, p. 4). A basis for comparison, Britain's percentage of citizens that claimed a religion in reported in a year 2000 study was 48%. The U.S. percentage was 86% (Kelly, 2006).

Additionally, religiosity in the U.S. military has become a popular contemporary research topic. The U.S. military, in particular, mirrors society's tendency towards religious belief and is often considered more religious because of the danger associated with the profession. The concept of "no atheists in foxholes" makes the issues of tolerance and acceptance of religious diversity in the U.S. military more effectual. Also, the U.S. military mirrors the cultural aspects of society, but the military as an organization concerns itself with religiosity for different reasons than the public. The inherent danger in the military profession encourages military commanders to have heightened awareness of religious matters. Brinsfield states, "[the] danger and chaos of war give rise to the human need to believe that a greater spiritual being is guiding one's fate for the best, regardless of whether one lives or dies. In this sense, it helps soldiers to believe that they are fighting for a cause that is moral and right in the eyes of their religion. This is an important source of motivation for soldiers all over the world" (Brinsfield, 1998, p. 404).

Furthermore, Brinsfield's research finds studies indicating the number of Army service members that identify themselves as religious. "Many soldiers in the American Army culture do identify with a specific religious faith – some 299,958 or 64% of active duty soldiers in April 2001 – but many are also reluctant to define too closely what they mean by religion, faith, and especially spirituality" (Brinsfield, 1998, p. 400). Questioning soldiers about their religious preferences or beliefs is considered a personal or intimate act. However, Brinsfield's findings get more specific assessing the major religions found in the U.S. Army. Beyond the 86% of American's that admit they have some level of spirituality, Army survey respondents admit a more personal association with specific religions. "Among Army soldiers in 2001 the rate of identification with one of the seven larger religious faith groups in the Army – Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu – was 64%, one percent point higher than the national average" (Brinsfield, 1998, p. 405).

Why is religiosity important to the military commander? "The working hypothesis is that all soldiers have human needs and most have spiritual needs broadly defined, and that converting these needs into strengths of will and character is an important part of combat leadership…" (Brinsfield, 1998, p. 398). As noted previously, human beings are in a constant state of development, and part of that development is the search for meaning. The normative culture of the U.S. military and the task to uniformly train and educate midshipmen at the Naval Academy helps define a homogeneous set of values which may create biases for mainstream religious beliefs. The scholastic-military environment may be closely tied with religiosity; the students' search for self-identity, when it is challenged by change, may very well include recourse to religion (Marty & Appleby, 1997).

Designed to develop cadets mentally, physically, and morally, the search for meaning is a large part of development for the Service Academies' cadets. An example of this process as a program is the Cadet Leader Development System at West Point: "This [spiritual] domain explicitly recognizes that character is rooted in the very essence of who we are as individuals, and discerning 'who we are' is a lifelong search for meaning" (Brinsfield, 1998, p. 400). Spiritual development and religiosity's impact are further evident in the Army's Well-Being Strategic Plan of 2001. "The spiritual state [of

well-being], according to the Army Well-Being Plan, 'centers on a person's religious/philosophical needs and may provide powerful support for values, morals, strength of character, and endurance in difficult and dangerous circumstances'" (Brinsfield, 1998, p. 404).

Why is religiosity important to military academy leadership beyond the supporting literature already reviewed? Because "…the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) at the University of California, Los Angeles…found that among students entering college in 2004, three-fourths say they are 'searching for meaning/purpose in life,' eight in ten believe in God, more than two-thirds pray, more than half perceive God as 'love' or as the 'creator,' and about half experience God as a 'protector'" (Headquarters, United States Air Force, 2005, p. 5). Ignoring an integral development scheme of U.S. military academy cadets could, therefore, potentially truncate or confuse their growth into successful junior officers.

Recognizing the influence, impact, and importance of religiosity on individual service members and the military culture, the leadership of the U.S. Navy offers guidance to its subordinate commands to help develop positive religious atmospheres. The Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) states, "[Commanders] shall provide for the free exercise of religion by implementing the policy and procedures set forth in this instruction" (Chief of Naval Operations, 2003). Supporting the U.S. Constitution's first amendment the CNO and the Secretary of the Department of the Navy (SECNAV) both promulgate instructions explicitly specifying the freedom of religion and recognizing the aspect of religiosity that exists in the U.S. Navy. As the SECNAV states, "Commanders shall provide a Command Religious Program (CRP) in support of religious needs and preferences of the members of their commands, eligible family members and other authorized personnel" (Secretary of the Navy, 2005). The CRP is tasked with supporting a religious program unbiased towards any particular religion. However, Judeo-Christian bias is often evident as it was in the recent Air Force Academy report on religious intolerance. The Naval Academy has deep roots in its Christian heritage but is not immune from similar biases though it is an institution of great depth and diversity of religion. The command guidance suggests that the Academy should value religion – not *a* religion.

C. DIVERSITY OF RELIGION IN THE U.S. MILITARY AND THE U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY

> Diversity was initially defined as: the different or dissimilar attitudes, values, and way of life between people based on race, religion, color, national origin, economic status, and gender. This definition paved the evolution of diversity… (Phelps, 1997, p. vii)

What is diversity of religion? First of all, cultural diversity refers to religion as a primary individual identity difference (Varvel, 2000). Secondly, "it is important to note that the armed forces [are] religiously diverse..." (Varvel, 2000, p. 10) With the number of religious denominations in the U.S. growing from forty-five in 1940 to over 2,000 in 1998 religious diversity is on the rise (Brinsfield, 1998). The U.S. military and the Naval Academy's religious diversity, commensurate with U.S. contemporary society because its population is based upon the current U.S. population, increase as U.S. religious diversity increases. Religious diversity impacts feelings of acceptance and adjustment among members of the in-group (the majority religious groups) and the out-group (the minority religious groups). This study focuses on all types of religious midshipmen from both the in-group and the out-group because "[diversity] refers to the collective (all-inclusive) mixture of differences and similarities along a given dimension." Diversity focuses on the collective mixture (Phelps, 1997, p. 20).

Why is understanding diversity of the institution important? Leadership of men and women of different faiths in the armed services and at the Naval Academy requires a certain level of understanding; this understanding comes from an awareness and respect for the diversity within the institution. Successful leadership requires "awareness, understanding, and acceptance" of diversity (Phelps, 1997, p. 2). Without successful leadership, military institutions and commands fail. Mission failure because of a lack of understanding of religious diversity is uncommon. When misunderstanding becomes a predominant part of any institution, conflict is likely to occur. "Culture is largely derivative of religion" and misunderstanding culture is often the root cause of mistrust and conflict (Swain, 2002, p. 2).

However, understanding and respecting diversity is a never-ending task and failure may be dire in any military organization. Failure to appreciate individual differences through awareness of and sensitivity to diversity can impede the DoD's primary mission – the defense of the U.S. (Phelps, 1997).

Diversity is often a term associated with gender or race differences among men and women. However, the overt diversity of gender and race are not the only differences manifest in an organization. Cultural differences, belief differences, and often religious differences, while often covert, may have as much impact, if not more, than the overt issues of diversity on which we focus today. One hundred years ago religion (before race and ethnicity) would have been first in mind when discussing diversity (Marty & Appleby, 1997). Additionally, as religiosity increases in the U.S. and its military, so does the significance of religious diversity issues facing the military institution. Religious differences have, in many ways, become more significant in the past two decades (Marty & Appleby, 1997).

Different backgrounds bring different perspectives and different strengths to the fore. However, diverse backgrounds also bring diverse opinions that sometimes result in conflict. The diversity in the U.S. military and at the U.S. Naval Academy is a strength that, when properly tuned, fosters an extraordinary environment of innovation, learning, and fraternity. One of America's greatest strengths is its diversity (Phelps, 1997). Midshipmen and service members who are unable to view diversity as a strength are hindrances to progress and mission accomplishment. In 1991, Whitney Young, Jr. said, "We may have come over on different ships, but we're all in the same boat now," and that boat sinks or sails based on how its sailors perceive diversity (Phelps, 1997, p. 31).

While it is not imperative for everyone to get along at the Naval Academy or in the U.S. military, it is necessary that service members at least respect each others differences in a professional manner. Cultural institutions, in a world with e-mail, internet, and other mass communication capabilities, had their value boundaries penetrated. Developing a community culture that accepts people living by religious principles together with other community members living by a different set of religious principals is the modern day challenge of religious diversity (Herbert, 2003).

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Accepting all legitimate religious practices while not establishing any type of religion for the institution is, at best, tricky. Increasing religiosity in the military supports ever-growing religious diversity and, therefore, a need for understanding and acceptance to maintain a similar growth rate. The U.S. Air Force Headquarters states, "[the] task of providing for free exercise of religion, while not appearing to establish a religion, is complex enough in any government setting" (Headquarters, United States Air Force, 2005, p. iv).

So, what does the literature offer as a solution? Leadership is using diversity to an organization's advantage (Phelps, 1997). An example of working within a culture of diversity and attempting to right wrongs from the top down comes from Admiral Elmo Zumwalt's historical leadership of the U.S. Navy. Admiral Zumwalt turned the Navy's attention to diversity. He strove to sensitize sailors to the differences between people. Focused on education, Zumwalt utilized trained facilitators to educate his message of sensitivity (Varvel, 2000). While Zumwalt's programs were developed to combat racism, less obvious but certainly present issues of religious tolerance and understanding were always part of the diversity continuum. Leadership through understanding and action is, therefore, a key to making diversity a strength of the institution vice a hindrance to institutional process. Ultimately, the goal is mission accomplishment.

D.   ACCEPTANCE AND TOLERANCE OF DIFFERING BELIEFS

This section briefly describes examples of contemporary tolerance issues within the military and explores tolerance and acceptance issues within the organization as they relate to diversity and organizational conflict. Differing beliefs or values are a source of conflict within any organization; it might be easier to manage people who are similar, but individual differences, while potential strengths within the organization, cause organizational conflict (Phelps, 1997). The business world's desire for efficiency seeks to alleviate organizational negative conflict by promoting studies aimed at understanding the process of increasing levels of acceptance and tolerance. The focal organization, or institution, for this thesis is the Brigade of midshipmen at the U.S. Naval Academy.

Furthermore, acceptance and tolerance of diversity is a common research theme with respect to gender or race. Religious diversity, however, is still limited in scope and depth. The covert or personal nature of an individual's beliefs makes acceptance and tolerance issues more subtle. Discrimination because of formal religious affiliation is less important today than it has been through most of American history (Marty & Appleby, 1997). Contemporary religious diversity issues are often subtle when compared to race and gender diversity issues. Consequently, the acts of intolerance and lack of acceptance because of religious diversity is often more subtle. Placing religious diversity issues into the backdrop is not the answer to tolerance and acceptance issues. Integration and awareness is a start to solving intolerance and acceptance issues (Phelps, 1997). Being the same is not necessarily the answer in a military institution like the Naval Academy; it is important that "...the organization can say, we are all on the same team, with our differences not despite them" (Phelps, 1997, p. 16).

Acceptance and tolerance of religious differences come through understanding. Understanding comes from education about and immersion in different belief systems. The Naval Academy is an academic and military institution that appears cognizant of religiosity's impact on midshipmen and institutional policy. While understanding religiosity's role in the institution, secular ideals and the Constitution's first amendment prohibiting establishment of an official religion culminate in a tenuous dynamic within the Brigade of midshipmen. Policy can read what is proper, but application and action upon ideas is less tangible and tougher to tackle when facing acceptance and tolerance issues associated with religious diversity. The separation of church and institutional policy, religious tolerance, and absence of religious persecution, are expectations within a majority of American organizations. State-based institutions have difficulty accommodating state sponsored religion because the West expects secularization as a precondition of good governance (Kelly, 2006).

Furthermore, the dynamic between policy and practice is observable through institutional religiosity. Religion is the tangible, sponsored, written structure of acceptable belief systems. Religiosity is the intangible, feeling, growing, and adapting personal beliefs maintained by those who espouse legitimate religious values. A cultural change within the military workforce promoting diversity acceptance will lead to reduced

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conflict between groups with different backgrounds. Assumptions about people based on the way a person chooses to worship or not worship God need to be unlearned. Sensitivity and understanding of religious diversity will help eliminate stereotypes and reduce conflicts (Varvel, 2000). Promoting understanding of different beliefs will allow religiously zealous service members to accept and tolerate versus misunderstand and potentially condemn beliefs different from their own. Religiosity, through understanding, can unite and strengthen the military institution. After all, "[countries], clans, military services, and individual soldiers are products of their respective cultures, and they are either empowered or imprisoned" (Swain, 2002, p. 15).

Empowering service members by encouraging the military culture to accept individual differences as strengths is not a simple task. Differences, when not accepted or tolerated, may lead to exclusion. The in-group (majority) always has the potential to exclude the out-group (minority) often because of misunderstanding beliefs. Boundaries in which moral values, rules, and consideration of fairness apply are constructed by the in-group.   Individuals or groups that exist outside of the fabricated boundaries are considered nonentities, expendable, or undeserving. Knowing or exploiting them is, therefore, appropriate, acceptable, or just (Kilby, 1993). Understanding religiosity's motivation within religious groups may curtail exclusion by allaying sources of misinformation.   Strengthening the military institution through understanding via education and immersion may alleviate many forms of intolerance and promote a more accepting environment of varying belief systems.

Tolerance and acceptance of varying beliefs is the ultimate goal of the Navy's policies toward religion. The Navy has a strong and straight forward policy towards religious freedom and tolerance. As the Chief of Navy Chaplains (a two-star Admiral) states, "DoD policy requires commanders to accommodate individual religious practices consonant with the best interests of the unit (DoDD 1300.17). Tolerance and mutual respect guide Navy policy, doctrine and practice" (Chief of Navy Chaplains, 2005). Understanding and respecting religious diversity is at the forefront of issues for the Navy's religious institutional leadership.   "In settings other than Divine Services, chaplains are encouraged to respect the diversity of the community as they facilitate the free exercise of religion guaranteed by the Constitution and military policy (DoDD

1304.19)" (Chief of Navy Chaplains, 2005). Furthermore, the Department of Defense proclaims in its "DoDD 1350.2, 'Department of Defense Equal Opportunity Program,' [that it is] unlawful to discriminate against persons or group based on…religion…this is contrary to good order and discipline and is counterproductive to combat readiness and mission accomplishment" (Headquarters, United States Air Force, 2005, p. 15).

Contrasting issues to tolerance and acceptance arise when the institution lacks awareness of religiosity's impact on the individual service member. The Air Force Academy provided an excellent example of a military institution similar to the Naval Academy where a lack of understanding of religiosity among its cadets led to an injunction of the institution's character. "At the core of this issue is the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which all members of the U.S. Armed Forces have sworn to protect and defend. It states that, 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof…'" (Headquarters, United States Air Force, 2005, p. 1) The overarching policy of the U.S. is the freedom of religious expression. Freedom is the ability to believe and act on those religious beliefs without threat or act of persecution. The Air Force Academy's recent assessment concerning religious intolerance found a failure to care for cadets' needs and a misunderstanding of permissible and impermissible expression of beliefs. Overt discrimination was not considered an issue, but misunderstanding the proper expression of religious belief within the Wing led to allegations of religious intolerance (Headquarters, United States Air Force, 2005). The assessment finding exemplifies the idea of religious groups getting along through understanding and acceptance. Overall, for the academic and military institution of the U.S. Air Force Academy, "[the] task is not simple, but the principle is…create and nurture a climate founded on **respect**, the very bedrock of [the Air Force's] core values of **Integrity first**, **Service before self**, and **Excellence in all we do**" (Headquarters, United States Air Force, 2005, p. iv). The aforementioned task is perpetually before all U.S. military academies. The Naval Academy is not an exception to the vigilance required to maintain an environment that follows the direction of the SECNAV, CNO, and Chief of Navy Chaplains.

The more observable overt intolerances are often seen when dealing with individuals whose religion requires actions that seem abnormal in comparison to the

institution's majority. In other words, religious specific behavior may make the covert, overt. If race and gender are easily identifiable, closer observation can find behavior easily identifiable. Religiosity compels individuals within an institution to behave the way they believe is right and just. Values dictate behavior and for those individuals who espouse religious values, their behavior is closely related to the mandates of their faith or belief system. Reactions to and misinterpretations of religious based behavior by employers may be problematic for employees. Consequential discrimination may create insurmountable barriers for employees (Mael, 2005).

More specifically, the military and the U.S. Naval Academy expect similar if not uniform performance and behavior from its service members. Religiosity impacts individuals in different ways. The expectations are often biased toward the in-group as the majority's behavior is often proper behavior. Behavior different from the in-group's may be deemed inappropriate or unacceptable. For example, Mael, when discussing religious mandated constraints for Jews, notes that events designed for organizational cohesion, such as picnics or retreats, are often scheduled on Saturdays – the Jewish Sabbath (Mael, 2005). Consequently, not fitting the corporate image can be reason for vocational difficulties (Mael, 2005). At the Naval Academy midshipmen strive to fit a specific image, but the out-group's religiously fervid often do not fit the mold or model image of a midshipman. Individuals who are willing to sacrifice their religious fervor for assimilation are often more likely to fit Mael's image. However, the history between Christianity and anti-Semitism distinguished between religion and religiosity indicating a connection between intolerance and religiosity (Lippy, 1994). In the past, striving to fit the "corporate image" decreased misunderstanding, questions of loyalty, and behavioral differences. Modern research indicates, as stated earlier in this section, that out-group assimilation (service members striving to behave the same way and leave their beliefs and religious and cultural differences behind because of intolerance) is not the answer to strengthening the institution.

E.   U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY RELIGIOUS CULTURE AND STRUCTURE

It may not be the church's function to regiment young men in barracks; but it is the church's function to indoctrinate its youth in such a thorough understanding and appreciation of moral and spiritual values that life in any barracks with the roughest and toughest of men will not prove too

great a strain. It may not be the church's function to teach and encourage men to kill; but it is the church's function and duty to under gird a man with such a faith and with such an understanding of the issues involved that he will be able to accomplish what is expected of him by his God and by his country (Moody, Price, Johnson, Cleary, and Atkins, 1945, p. 67).

The U.S. Naval Academy's command religious program, led by navy chaplains of various faiths, offers and sponsors all religious programs supported by the institution. A purported inescapable fact of religiosity and military culture is that "[religion] is inextricably linked to and shapes culture, providing the moral basis for civilized society and influencing attitudes toward entry into and the conduct of war" (Swain, 2002, p. 9). From the operational or mission oriented perspective, "[culture] and religion are significant operational factors that commanders must formally consider during operational planning in a more structured and focused manner in order to mitigate possible negative impacts upon plan execution and operational success" (Swain, 2002, p. 1). The Naval Academy's religious program is the answer to the religious and cultural needs for structure and focus. Reported by the Chaplain Center, U.S. Naval Academy in 2006, and visible in Table 1, are the following Brigade recognized and sponsored religious extra-curricular activity (ECA) groups and the number of participants in each group. Notably, over 25% of the Brigade of Midshipmen reportedly associates with at least one religious ECA.

Table 1.   USNA Sponsored Religious Extra Curricular Activity Groups and Approximate Number of Midshipmen Members

Religious ECA*	Approximate Number of Midshipmen Members*
Baptist Student Ministries	160
Buddhist Midshipman Club	15
Campus Crusade for Christ	178
Catholic Midshipman Club	150
Christian Science Club	20
Church of Christ Club	10
Fellowship of Christian Athletes	90
Islamic Midshipman Club	9
Jewish Midshipman Club	40
Latter Day Saints Club	55
Navigators	65
Officers Christian Fellowship	280
Orthodox Club	12
Protestant Midshipman Club	60
Total	1144

*As reported by the Office of the Chaplain, U.S. Naval Academy, May 2006.

Supporting the moral mission of the Naval Academy, the command religious program and the associated chaplains do their best to promote an accepting and tolerant atmosphere for the Brigade of midshipmen. "A CRP (Command Religious Program) is the command's total collection of religious ministry and activities planned and executed within a command by the RMT (Religious Ministry Team) under the professional supervision of a cognizant chaplain. The CRP requires the annual approval and logistical support of the commander/commanding officer, whose authorization ensures that religious ministry tasks are adequately budgeted and implemented" (Chief of Naval Operations, 2003). Chaplains are often a comfort to midshipmen of all faiths as a confidant, a counselor, and a professional mentor. "A chaplain provides for the free exercise of religion for all military members of the Department of the Navy" (Chief of Naval Operations, 2003). Additionally, chaplains, regardless of religious affiliation, provide spiritually uplifting care and support to all service members. Midshipmen have varying needs and some feel comfortable talking with chaplains about such needs, wants, or ideas. Many midshipmen, religious and secular, feel the need during their time at the Naval Academy to associate and consult with a chaplain regarding personal issues. "To such [midshipmen] the chaplain can point the way, bring inspiration, comfort, and courage" (Moody, Price, Johnson, Cleary, and Atkins, 1945, p. 20).

Furthermore, while the CRP focuses on the institution, chaplains and the Academy's leadership do well to not forget the individuality of religiosity. "As a condition of appointment, every RMP (Religious Ministry Professional) must be willing to function in a pluralistic environment in the military, where diverse religious traditions exist side-by-side with tolerance and respect" (Secretary of the Navy, 2005). On the subject of spirituality within the Army, General John Hendrix is quoted saying, "Spirituality is an individual matter. We must not cross the line between church and state. But in general spiritual fitness is important to any organization. Spiritual fitness helps shape and mold our character. Spiritual fitness provides each of us with the personal qualities which enable us to withstand difficulties and hardship" (Brinsfield, 1998, p. 410). The Naval Academy CRP exists to promote spiritual fitness within the Brigade of midshipmen.

Additionally, religiosity allows another avenue outside of the classroom to educate midshipmen in matters of morality and leadership. Of great concern to many midshipmen is their ability to understand and support their subordinates once they reach the Fleet as commissioned officers. Spiritual capital, a variation of social capital, is of concern to midshipmen as new managers and proficient leaders (Paul, 2005). Spiritual capital, to religious and secular midshipmen, is pertinent because of its practical use for newly commissioned officer leadership challenges. More importantly, most midshipmen and the command religious program recognize the need to consider culture and religion when dealing with military units to assist in planning for mission success. Commanders that fail to consider culture and religion during mission planning invite unforeseen consequences and, possibly, mission failure (Swain, 2002).

Mission success at the Naval Academy is clearly explained by the Commandant of midshipmen; he states that the mission is to "provide leaders of great character, competence, vision and drive to transform the Navy and Marine Corps and serve the nation in a century of promise and uncertainty" (Commandant of Midshipmen, 2005). Tolerance and acceptance of differing beliefs and religions are crucial for mission success. Issues of tolerance and acceptance arise, however, when midshipmen are thought to have given up their rights to democracy, freedom, individual liberty, and tolerance upon entering the Naval Academy (Kelly, 2006). The idea that any individual would give these rights away is incongruous with Naval Academy policy, but it still exists among the midshipmen within the Brigade causing intolerance issues.

The Chief of Navy Chaplains directly addresses the issues of tolerance and understanding the discreet balance of exercising religion without promoting a specific religion in his memorandum to the Navy and Marine Fleet.

> Title 10 of the United States Code, Section 6031, requires commanders to cause Divine Services to be performed… Navy policy on prayer recognizes the distinction between Divine Services and other command functions that customarily or traditionally may contain elements commonly held to be religious, such as invocations or benedictions… By emphasizing mutual respect, cooperation, and inclusiveness in delivering prayers at command functions, chaplains encourage recognition of values and virtues which are crucial to military life… They also model positive

behavior and provide a concrete example that mirrors the rich heritage of strength through diversity that is a hallmark of our nation (Chief of Navy Chaplains, 2005).

Concern for a large population of religiously diverse midshipmen is supported by the exponentially increasing diversity of religious and spiritual groups within the United States along with over 90 percent of service members claiming to be religious. Additionally, the importance of religiosity, religious freedom, and the separation of church and institutional policy is supported by Constitutional, military, navy, and Naval Academy policy. The importance of religious practice, tolerance, and understanding are therefore officially mandated. Religion and its impact on the culture within the Brigade is a pertinent and pervasive topic partly assessed through discussions with volunteer midshipmen.

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III. METHODOLOGY

Eight focus groups were held using semi-structured questioning to promote discussion on religiosity. A breakdown of the focus group participants is represented in Table 2 below. A background survey, essay question, and group discussion questions were provided to focus group participants during a one-hour session. Analyses methods included basic descriptive statistics for the survey questions and qualitative content coding of the transcriptions and short essays. In addition to coding the transcriptions and essays for content, major themes and illustrative examples were separated, analyzed, and summarized. Focus group participants were from two Academy classes, seniors and juniors in the classes of 2006 and 2007 respectively; each notable religion (including secularism), and religiously practicing and non-practicing midshipmen. The selection criteria were bound by gender. Only males were members of the focus groups to prevent the possible discussion of gender bias. Operational definitions for religious groups in the context of this research are as follows: Christian – any midshipman who believes that Jesus Christ is the son of God or God himself and considers him or herself part of a Christian congregation at the U.S. Naval Academy; Other – any midshipman who is not a Christian as per the previous definition.

Table 2.   Focus Group Composition/Design – Religious Affiliation and Class

Religion		Midshipmen Class	
		Second Class (2007)	First Class (2006)
	Christians	2	2
	Non-Christians	2	2
	Total Focus Groups per Class	4	4

The Naval Academy's office of Institutional Research assisted in the selection of midshipmen for this study. Selection of midshipmen for focus groups was a convenience sample taken from a random sample of midshipmen in the classes of 2006 and 2007. Currently 1,751 male midshipmen comprise the classes of 2006 and 2007. Accurate religious preference codes associated with their social security numbers were found for 1217 (67% of total) male midshipmen. A convenience sample of 80 midshipmen of different religions separated by class was invited to participate through e-mail. Ultimately 24 volunteered to participate and eight focus groups were held.

Focus group sessions were one hour and held during lunch or dinner time over the period of one hour. Food and drinks were provided, and the midshipmen were instructed to come in relaxed clothing. The atmosphere was relaxed and the pace was kept relatively slow to make the midshipmen feel comfortable throughout the session. Some sessions did not complete the verbal questions, but quality over quantity was the idea of not rushing the answers. Sessions were held with a round table format to promote inter-respondent discussion in a remote and quiet conference room. A digital recorder was placed in the center of the table to record the verbal portion of the sessions. A survey form, one index card, one piece of college-ruled paper, one pencil, and an identification number were placed in front of each participant. One piece of college-ruled paper was placed in the middle of the discussion table. Participants referred to each other by assigned number and the questions promoted discussion between participants. Written answers were completed on the index cards and the group issued piece of college-ruled paper. The three-minute essay was completed on the individually issued college-ruled paper. The survey and questions used for this study's focus groups are provided in the Appendix.

Focus group discussion questions were designed to isolate the following themes: characteristics of the model midshipmen including views and values (what type of person fits in best and why), cultural implications of religion within the Brigade, the impact of religion on each participant during his time at the Academy, and illustrative examples of acceptance or intolerance at the Academy. Written questions attempted to isolate the following themes: feelings about the command religious program (CRP), cultural implications of religion within the Brigade, strengths and areas of improvement for the

CRP, and illustrative examples of intolerance at the Academy. Table 3 illustrates the theme/question relationships. The question guide is presented in the Appendix. The rationale behind written and oral questioning is that some respondents find sensitive and personal issues easier to communicate through writing rather than discussion.

Table 3.   Question and Topic Format for Focus Groups

Questions	Topic				
	General "Religion in the Military" Issues/Cultural implications of religion at USNA	Personal inspiration/impact of religion on each participant during time at USNA/feelings about the CRP	Characteristics of the model midshipman (what type of person fits in best at USNA and why)	Tolerance for others and personally perceived acceptance within the Brigade with illustrative examples	Experience with intolerance because of religion with illustrative examples
Question 1	X		X	X	
Index Card Activity 1	X	X			
Question 2	X		X	X	X
Index Card Activity 2	X		X	X	
Question 3	X	X	X	X	X
Round Table Writing Assignment	X	X			
Question 4	X	X		X	X
Question 5	X	X	X	X	X
3 Minute Essay	X			X	X

Furthermore, survey forms were provided to establish participants' background information. The survey is presented in the Appendix. Focus group letter, participant identification number, and religious code were first self-reported. Religious affiliation was established per participant to assist in coding and ensuring the right participants were present in the each focus group. Levels of religiosity were polled by questioning the

amount of times participants practiced their respective religions and by personal reporting of perceived religiosity (labeled devotion on the survey form). Both self-reported, religious devotion and practice range on a Likert scale from 1 to 7 with 1 indicating *not at all* and 7 indicating *extremely*. Weekly meeting frequency is self-reported by indicating the number of times each respondent meets with a religious group per week and the values available were *(1) zero, (2) once, (3) twice, or (4) three or more* times per week.

The data collected on the survey forms was placed into SPSS, a data evaluation computer program, to establish mean and standard deviation values for reported levels of devotion, practice, and weekly meeting frequency. Percentages of religions and the breakdown between Christians and Non-Christians were also reported.

In conclusion, the methodology used in this research study provided both quantitative and qualitative results analyzing background survey data, transcriptions of focus groups' discussions, and respondents' essays. Survey answers and transcribed responses provide the results from the compilation of all focus group data.

IV. RESULTS

Presented in Chapter IV are the results from the focus groups with 24 midshipmen interviewed in eight focus group sessions. The members of each focus group were either first or second class midshipmen of the graduating classes of 2006 and 2007 respectively. The Appendix provides the question list and background survey form administered to each member of the focus groups.

A. SURVEY RESULTS

All 24 of the participants responded to the survey that was handed out at the beginning of the focus group sessions. The percentages of each religion self-reported by respondents is presented below in Figure 1 and further explained in Table 4. As stated in Chapter III, focus groups were separated by class and by self-reported religious group (Christian or Non-Christian) on file with the Naval Academy's Office of Institutional Research. Table 5 indicates the number of Christians, Non-Christians, and overall midshipmen sampled in the focus groups. Additionally, Table 5 indicates the mean values and standard deviations for three of the variables: devotion, practice, and weekly meeting frequency. Both self-reported, devotion and practice range on a Likert scale from 1 to 7 with 1 indicating *not at all* and 7 indicating *extremely*. Weekly meeting frequency is self-reported by indicating the number of times each respondent meets with a religious group per week and the values available were *(1) zero, (2) once, (3) twice, or (4) three or more* times per week.
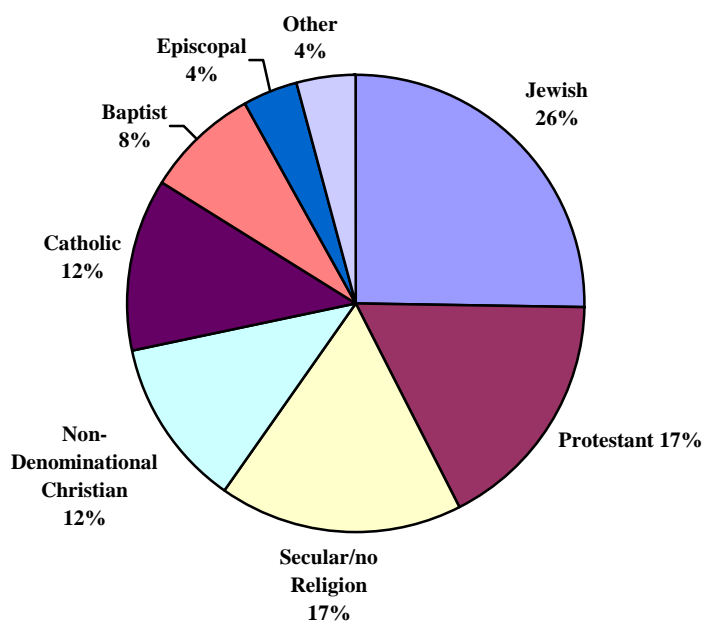
Figure 1.   Percentage of Self-reported Religions from Background Survey

Table 4.   Frequency and Percentage of Religions Coded by Background Survey

Religion	Frequency	Percent
Jewish	6	25.0
Protestant	4	16.7
Secular/No religion	4	16.7
Non-Denominational Christian	3	12.5
Catholic	3	12.5
Baptist	2	8.3
Episcopal	1	4.2
Other	1	4.2
Total	24	100.0

Table 5.   Means and Standard Deviations for Self-Reported Devotion, Practice, and Weekly Religious Event Attendance

	Christian (n = 13)	Non-Christian (n = 11)	All (n = 24)
Devotion*			
Mean	4.69	3.18	4.00
SD	1.75	1.66	1.84
Practice*			
Mean	3.92	3.27	3.63
SD	1.85	1.56	1.71
Weekly Meet**			
Mean	0.77	0.82	0.79
SD	0.83	0.87	0.83

* Scale = 1 - 7 (1 = not at all; 7 = extremely). ** Scale = 0, 1, 2, 3 or more.

Notably, there exists little difference between Christian and Non-Christian devotion, practice, and weekly meeting reports. However, means for the Christian respondents indicate slightly more devotion and practice than the Non-Christians. This mean difference is expected because of the atheist, agnostic, and secular respondents in the Non-Christian focus groups.

Following the background survey data is the verbal and written data content analysis. Transcriptions and essays, as indicated in Chapter III, were content coded and repeated themes were identified. Illustrative examples through participant quotations are offered in the focus group results to best illustrate the themes and content of the focus groups' discussions and essay responses.

B.   FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

Five general categories of questions were asked with additional sub-questions:

1.   Adjusting to life as a midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy:

    a.   What kinds of people and with what characteristics fit in best?

    b.   What views and values are important?

2.   Importance of religion in the culture or climate of the U.S. Naval Academy:

    a   What beliefs/religions are dominant?

    b.   What beliefs are unusual?

    c.   Is there too much emphasis on religion at the USNA (is there too little)?

3.   How religious affiliation at USNA impacts midshipman

4.   Examples of how midshipmen have been accepted or ostracized:

      a.   By individuals

      b.   By the command (i.e. faculty or staff)

      c.   By the leadership

5.   Additional comments about the role of religion at USNA

During the focus group discussions, the midshipmen were asked to write strengths and suggestions for improvement to the command religious programs. Index cards were used to write about religion as part of the Academy's culture. A three-minute essay was the final exercise to capture any unsaid intolerance examples. Concluding the discussions, the three-minute essay was offered with the following question (borrowed from LT Adam Goldberg's survey to Jewish military officers, NPS 2005): Have you had any case where you have experienced, felt you have experienced, or witnessed any sort of religious intolerance from other service members, faculty, or staff; senior, peer, or subordinate, would you please explain?

Quotations from individual focus group members offer illustrative examples of overarching themes. The focus group answers were analyzed for content and the reoccurring main themes are explained in question order throughout this chapter. Results of the focus groups are presented below.

1.   Characteristics of the Model Midshipman

The first focus group question focuses on the characteristics, values, and views of midshipmen that fit in best at the Naval Academy. Many similar responses were given depicting the model midshipman that, for the focus group members, resembles the overall idea of the model Naval Academy midshipman.

a.   *Characteristics*

Characteristics focused mostly around personality types. The views of the focus groups is that the model midshipman is a personable, accepting, partly realistic, partly idealistic, open minded, gregarious, adaptable, team oriented, disciplined, courageous, aggressive, competitive, optimistic, competent, physically and mentally

tough, internally motivated, athletic and academically superior, white, Christian, Anglo-Saxon, conservative Republican male who can take constructive criticism and has an easy going sense of humor.

Despite the vast diversity of midshipmen within the Brigade, the focus groups all shared a relatively similar idea of the model or stereotypical midshipman who fits in best. However, the following quotation identifies the need for the model midshipman described above to adjust to the differences among his peers.

> One of the most important things that someone can have when they come here is that they can quickly adapt to different situations and work with different types of people because not everybody here is the same – we all come from similar backgrounds, but everybody has different strengths and weaknesses. So, to be able to adjust to work with your peers in an environment where you need to work as a team is most important.

(2/C, Christian)

According to the respondents, adjustment was most commonly associated with the idea that all midshipmen have similar backgrounds. Differences of race, gender, or creed are often the only dissimilarities and the respondents didn't perceive these differences as affecting background. Interestingly, most respondents believe that midshipmen have similar backgrounds as though being an athletic or academic leader in high school makes for similar development. However, the midshipmen clearly recognize the vast personal differences within the Brigade as evident in following quotation:

> The guys who fit in best are real personable. Guys who are likeable but accepting because you meet all kinds of people from everywhere…if you're gonna get along you have to really accept people for every kind of background, religion, race, whatever.

(1/C, Christian)

Confusion appears to exist between the expectations of the model midshipman versus the idea of acceptance of those midshipmen that do not fit the mold. More clarity on the subject of disparity between expectations of the model midshipman versus actual behavior and beliefs of midshipmen who do not easily fit the model is offered in the views and values responses.

b. *Views and Values*

Respondents discussed views and values of the model Naval Academy midshipman. Response topics included political, family, religious and ethical views and values. One of the most insightful quotations from the focus group sessions occurred during this question.

> …like you see with being accepting – it's got to go beyond tolerance. This place is more than just an undergraduate institution. We're trying to emulate, to a certain degree, life out in the fleet – there's going to be all different types of people, like you have here, but even more so – people out in the fleet will be more different than they are here, so I think you have to understand those that you're leading; [it] is critical – accepting not just tolerating.

> (1/C, Non-Christian)

The concept of acceptance over tolerance was a point of discussion for the group. While most groups tackled the concept of acceptance, no group focused on it with such vigor as the 1/C, Non-Christian group that made the aforementioned statement. One 1/C, Non-Christian group became excited when discussing the issue of acceptance over tolerance; it was notably more animate than the other seven focus groups during this discussion topic.

Honor and loyalty were consistently part of the conversation when discussing values. Almost all respondents noted that honor and/or loyalty were highly valued as a midshipman at the Naval Academy; those that didn't specifically mention honor or loyalty verbally agreed with their fellow focus group members. A former honor staff member stated:

> I think in order for somebody to be truly successful at the Academy, especially in regards to honor, they need to be brought up in a home where honor and integrity were stressed because I've been on the honor staff and there's definitely a lot of people who don't buy into honor. Not that we don't all make mistakes at certain times, but there are just people who don't think that being honest is that important…

> (1/C, Christian)

Loyalty is seen as a byproduct of plebe summer and just as important to fitting in as a midshipman as honor. The conflict between the two values, while discussed thoroughly among all focus groups, was consistently trumped by honor winning in dire

honor vs. loyalty scenarios. However, the proponents of loyalty appeared to simply have been quieter about the conflict, which was possibly caused by the issue of policy versus personal preference. Loyalty is noted by a couple of the participants as follows:

> Loyalty. Loyalty to each other is a big thing – for better or worse depending on the situation…Trust. Trust kind of ties into loyalty. You can't build meaningful relationships without trust.
>
> (2/C, Christian)
>
> I'd say loyalty is one of the big things. I've noticed a lot of cynicism about stuff like the honor concept, but in the end, I know, even people that are the most cynical that I know, if they tell you something you know you can trust them, and if they give you their word that they will do something it is as good as gold – they are intensely loyal. Especially within company, no one will ever do something to harm another person - they'll look out for their friends. (What about the conflict between loyalty and honor?) …if it is an egregious thing, that's when I think loyalty gets put in the back seat, but for a majority of the cases people are always looking out for each other.
>
> (1/C, Non-Christian)

Additionally, political views were consistently noted as republican or conservative with few dissenters. While focus group members recognized the existence of differing political views within the Brigade, the model midshipman was noted as being a Republican with conservative views along with the aforementioned characteristics. In the next quotation, the respondent identifies his thought about the association between political views and reasons for being a member of the military; his use of "it" refers to being a conservative Republican.

Reflecting the contrast between republican/conservative views versus democratic/liberal views is the following statement:

> I agree with 1 and 3 on the republican issue. I don't think it is everyone. I don't think you have to be. I have friends that have democratic views. I agree it is common but I don't think it is necessary. It changes their mindset on what they're fighting for, what they're here for.
>
> (1/C, Christian)

Additionally, while discussing political views, two 1/Cs comment:

> The first thing I think of as views is political… the vast majority are conservative Republican. I can think of people that aren't and are still fine midshipmen.

<div align="right">(1/C, Non-Christian)</div>

> …probably most, but I don't think it is as huge a majority as we think, just because I know a bunch of liberals and they are just much more quiet because the majority is Republican… you can get into great political debates or debates about anything, and I think the people that handle that better and the people that are much more open with stuff like that are the people that don't take it personally… It's not a personal affront, it's just an argument. Some people can take that and some people just take it the wrong way. And if they're the type of person to take it the wrong way they are likely to take other things in the wrong way.

<div align="right">(1/C, Non-Christian)</div>

The cautionary statement above is one of open-mindedness and acceptance of differing views even in heated conversation. However, most respondents did not understand why the model midshipman, a militant white Anglo-Saxon male, would not have conservative Republican views.

2. Importance of Religion to Culture and Climate

Most respondents were open and appeared comfortable when discussing issues of religion at the Naval Academy. This question focused on members' opinions of religion as part of the culture and climate of the Brigade. Christianity was consistently noted as the dominant religion within the Brigade varying between Catholicism and Protestantism housing the Christian majority. The outsiders were often noted as Atheists, Mormons, Jews, and Muslims. While all respondents noted the outward and overt presence of religion at the Academy, most were content with the Academy's emphasis on religion. The following sub-sections offer additional analysis of the aforementioned topics.

a. Dominant Beliefs and Religions

The general consensus among all participants is that Christianity is the dominant religion at the Naval Academy. There are variations among the responses that range from the general answer of Judeo-Christian beliefs to specific religions like

<div align="center">34</div>

Catholicism or Protestantism as being dominant, but all respondents agree that Christianity is the dominant religion. The dichotomy is well reflected in the following comments:

> I don't know if I can name any Jewish midshipmen off hand, but I would say most of us come from a Judeo-Christian background and most people who are religious in the religious groups are Christian.
>
> (1/C, Christian)
>
> Obviously, Protestant Christians is the most common. There is a bit of missionaryism… I don't think people push their beliefs but are just trying to encourage others to join them and share their beliefs.
>
> (2/C, Christian)
>
> Clearly the biggest group is Christianity. I would say between the Christians, in terms of representation I think the Catholics are the biggest.
>
> (2/C, Christian)
>
> Religions, from what I've seen, it's mainly Protestant and the various groups you get within that. There are also a significant number of Catholics, but I think the Protestants outweigh them.
>
> (1/C, Non-Christian)

The encouragement the 2/C midshipman discussed in the above comment was mentioned by every focus group at different points in the discussion sessions. Encouragement of religious practice by the Naval Academy's administration was uncomfortable for few respondents. Religion or class did not make a difference in the discussion of administrative encouragement toward religion. Overall, the respondents agreed that the administration supports religious belief and practice in a way that is respectful and understanding.

However, the difference between pushing beliefs versus encouraging others to share beliefs is applicable when discussing acceptance and tolerance. Proselytizing is an acceptable and practical act for certain Christian faiths; it is in contrast to the behavior of acceptance and tolerance when dealing with diversity of religion. More will be offered on this topic in a later question.

b.   *Unusual Beliefs or Religions*

The discussion about unusual religions and beliefs led to descriptions of religious groups and belief systems that are considered different or abnormal. Religions and beliefs that fall into the out-group were identified by focus group participants. Examples illustrating differences and why they are unusual were offered by the more open and comfortable respondents. The specific religions that were noted as being unusual, and sometimes considered odd, were Muslim, Christian Scientist, Buddhist, Hindu, Mormon, "Bible-thumping Baptists," Atheist, Agnostic, and "Non-religious folks."

Strange beliefs (or non-beliefs) were associated with atheism and agnosticism. However, there was also some commentary about possible racism because of recent events in the Middle-East and intolerance because of homophobia. The following quotation represents an example of homophobia and intolerance for those within the Brigade who accept homosexuality:

> …probably the biggest [type of intolerance] I've noticed is…homophobia. In a…religious culture or it might just be the military nature, if a midshipman is accepting of homosexuals he is often looked on as strange. Like if you have a gay friend it is looked on as strange, like, why would you hang out with someone like that.

> (1/C Non-Christian)

Additionally, racism is seen as a problem within the Brigade with respect to people of Middle-Eastern descent. Respondents blame the racist feelings or ideas on the recent war on terror and the lack of education provided to the Brigade about the Muslim religion.

> …this isn't a majority of midshipmen that believe this, but a large number especially with the war on terror going on in the Middle-East. Maybe there is a little bit of racism against people of Middle-Eastern descent…I think it is the kind of thing that happens when you get a bunch of dudes together – I think it is natural.

> (1/C Non-Christian)

> (In response) I think it is a lack of understanding of the Muslim culture despite the best efforts of the administration. You see a lot of people tend to stereotype Muslims in a way that they wouldn't say [stereotype] all

Catholics [as] terrorists because of what the IRA does in Ireland. They tend to take fundamentalism as the standard rather than the fringe group of a larger group.

<div align="right">(1/C Non-Christian)</div>

I know there are Muslims here, but I don't know anybody; I've never seen it or experienced it. I think it is odd that we don't even know who those people are because they would be praying five times a day.

<div align="right">(1/C, Christian)</div>

Additionally, a lack of personal interaction seems to influence some respondents' views about certain out-group beliefs. Some respondents do not personally know Jews or Muslims but know midshipmen of those faiths exist as fellow members of the Brigade. The mystery associated with the out-group, therefore, makes the in-group wary that their exist midshipmen who have deep beliefs different from the in-group. On a few occasions there was confusion and, in one case, disbelief from Christian respondents when discussing midshipmen who do not share the same beliefs as the in-group.

…I was surprised to see how many people are from the Jewish faith or Muslims. I guess I just didn't typically associate that they would be at the Academy. (Do you know any Jewish or Muslim midshipmen?) I don't know them personally, but I know who some are.

<div align="right">(2/C, Christian)</div>

Further evident of naivety and intolerance were the following comments made about atheism and agnosticism:

…Atheism is less accepted. I think people kind of look at it as something is wrong with you, and said earlier, agnostic. I think both those people are looked at as there is something wrong with you, you should know, you should believe this or that or at least have a belief.

<div align="right">(1/C, Non-Christian)</div>

Atheism is very uncomfortable bringing up here or even agnosticism – just even questioning the existence of God…I would be uncomfortable bring that up here (at USNA).

<div align="right">(1/C, Non-Christian)</div>

Clearly stated by all focus groups was the oddity associated with atheism and agnosticism. The lack of belief in some sort of deity was labeled by almost every respondent as strange and unusual. One respondent attempted to disprove the concept of atheism in his focus group (in which there were no atheists). In response to the other respondents in the focus group a 2/C stated the following about atheism:

> I have to second what they're saying about atheism because philosophically atheism is untenable. If you sit down with someone and have a debate about some sort of deity [you can] corner them and win in about five minutes…If you sit down and try to work through it then you can't eliminate the possibility of a God; so that (atheism) is pretty strange to me.

(2/C, Christian)

c.   *Emphasis on Religion (Too Much or Too Little)*

With the exception of a few outliers, the focus groups found consensus about emphasis on religion at the Naval Academy. The emphasis is considered balanced and proportionate. A few midshipmen mentioned religion is encouraged but not pressured upon the Brigade. Religion is noted as always being available in every possible variation, but it is never forced upon anyone.

The primary subjects mentioned in response to this sub-question were: religion in the classroom; the Superintendent's emphasis on religion; organized Brigade prayer (i.e. noon meal prayer); communication about religious events such as Bible studies and services; and religious education.

A great deal of discussion was held concerning noon meal prayer at the Anchor. Every day the Brigade of midshipmen has mandatory sit-down noon meal. Before the meal begins one of the Naval Academy chaplains offers a non-denominational benediction. With contemporary society facing issues of prayer in school, the Naval Academy has successfully maintained this enduring tradition of prayer before noon meal. The overwhelming response of the focus group members was acceptance and joy associated with the noon meal prayer. Every midshipman interviewed, including the secular, atheist, and agnostic respondents, believed that noon meal prayer is a great time to quietly reflect and be thankful for the goodness in their lives.

I don't think there is too much emphasis placed on it at all. At noon meal we pray; they don't force anybody to pray, they're not making the prayer Christian, Jewish, or Muslim or anything. It's kind of a generic prayer… it is not indicative of the Academy forcing religion on anybody…Just being in the military, we're all facing death, I think people in the military tend to be more religious.

(1/C, Christian)

One of the biggest controversies/debates here or the service in general is the noon meal prayer. What I like about it is that they switch between chaplains…What some of them say is very helpful, "please join me if you'd like," because some people aren't religious and choose to not partake of the prayers…

(2/C, Christian)

Additionally, this topic begins the personal feelings about religious culture at the Naval Academy and solicits some responses about associated discomfort. Until this point the questions have focused on outward perspectives about religion in general. This sub-question asks the focus group members to reflect upon the emphasis the administration and Brigade places on religion and how it affects each respondent as an individual. The present Superintendent received multiple comments about his emphasis on religion and religious programs at the Naval Academy.

…there is a lot of emphasis from the Sup about recreating/putting more emphasis on the chapel and the religious services here.

(2/C, Christian)

…I don't think it is pressed or pushed on us, but it feels like you hear about it a lot – tons of different [religious] meetings all of the time.

(2/C, Christian)

I think it is talked about a lot – probably more than it should be for a public or government place…

(1/C, Non-Christian)

Specifically speaking about the Superintendent of the Naval Academy one 2/C and three 1/C respondents offered similar statements, while another 1/C comments about the general administration:

This Sup started talking about it more – it was in his e-mails – even at his Sup's call, so it seems the administration started talking about it more.

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It has definitely become more talked about this year…with the Sup.

It's kind of made more of a front screen since the Sup came in and [he says] oh, you should do something, you should go to services or something.

(1/C, Non-Christian)

I think the academy, at least the Sup, has done a good job on speaking about the importance of faith. Whether or not it is important to you, it is important to your men, your Sailors and Marines…

(2/C, Non-Christian)

…sometimes it seems like the administration occasionally props up religion a little bit more than I probably would.

(1/C, Non-Christian)

A few examples were offered by respondents to help illustrate their impression of the Academy's emphasis on religion. The examples are presented below through some noteworthy illustrative examples.

Education, both in and out of the classroom, takes different forms when discussing religion. Some educators stress the issue of understanding different beliefs in order to increase a midshipman's ability to lead men and women in the combat forces. Other instructors, however, stress religion as a necessary part of each midshipman's personality. Understanding versus intolerance for midshipmen of varying beliefs is, therefore, also an issue in the classroom. Encouragement in the classroom is noted by one respondent:

Encouragement would be like military instructors, they know we're about to graduate, some of us will go off to war, so they encourage us, well not to find faith, but to be a little more religious.

(1/C, Christian)

They do push religion in an education sense because as officers you'll have men and women under you from a variety of different religions…[The instructors] educate you…so you can provide support necessary…to take care of your guys.

(2/C, Christian)

A poignant comment made about religious education lacking within the Brigade brings to light a potential reason for misunderstanding different beliefs and

religions among midshipmen. Education about and familiarization with different beliefs could lead to greater levels of understanding, tolerance, and overall acceptance within the Brigade and benefit leadership development for midshipmen before assuming low level command of sailors and marines in the Fleet.

> One thing I think is lacking…you're going to have sailors and marines under you with a variety of religious views and I think that there could be more of an emphasis on exposure to different religions because there are a multitude of opportunities for people to express their own religious beliefs but there isn't really any program for teaching people about other beliefs and the issues that could arise…among the people you are going to be leading.

> (2/C, Non-Christian)

3. Personal Impact because of Religious Affiliation

A more intimate question, the subject of personal impressions of religion as part of the culture and climate within the Brigade began this portion of the discussion. This question opened up the forum to personal introspective feelings about the impact had on each respondent because of his religious affiliation. The overwhelming consensus for the religious midshipmen is that their religiosity and the CRP helped provide a consistent comfort and support source during their time at the Academy. There is a dichotomy between the religious respondents that believe their religiosity has increased because of support, access, and desire, or decreased because of time constraints and scheduling conflicts.

Additionally, respondents identify increased levels of understanding and acceptance because of interaction with midshipmen of different beliefs and religions. Though most respondents believe midshipmen come from similar backgrounds, the differences between members of the Brigade and interaction with "different" midshipmen are viewed as educational and developmental.

> I had little contact with Jewish people before I came here, so it definitely helped me understand their religion and their points of view better.

> (1/C, Christian)

It's made me curious about other religions and their beliefs. Especially, I have a couple of Jewish kids in my company and some of their beliefs are interesting.

<div align="right">(1/C, Christian)</div>

A large portion of the discussion and written commentary about the CRP centered on the support structure and feelings of stability associated with each respondent's religiosity. Religious groups offer structure and the respondent's choice to interact within the religious group offered stability and support for a majority of focus group members.

Because of my religious background…I was able to go to a chaplain comfortably…I have a sense of something greater…and that kind of keeps me focused and keeps me going.

<div align="right">(1/C, Christian)</div>

My faith has gotten me through some really hard times…it gives me a foundation above myself of right and wrong and how one should behave.

<div align="right">(1/C, Christian)</div>

It's been a huge factor in my life and my development here. From plebe summer until now, when you hit a rough spot and there's something that just kind of rocks your world, that's the foundation that keep me moving.

<div align="right">(2/C, Christian)</div>

Furthermore, stressful times were discussed as the times when religion is most needed. The concept of "no atheist in a foxhole" was often mentioned by the respondents who noted the power of religion as a buttress during times of hardship at the Academy.

A lot of times you'll be going through a stressful situation and feel like you don't have any place to turn and it seems that you can just take a few moments out of your day and it helps to calm you, re-focus you, and give you the believe that you've got someone behind you helping you out. I've become stronger in my faith since I've been here.

<div align="right">(2/C, Christian)</div>

More like in times of struggle…that's when I seem to get more religious. It's kind of like a crutch every once in a while, and I wish it wasn't, but that's like it is.

<div align="right">(2/C, Christian)</div>

Mentioned previously, some respondents note the ease of attending religious meetings because of proximity, scheduling, ease, and access. The support structure seemed to grow for these respondents by creating a supportive environment within their chosen faith group that provided an escape from the daily Academy grind.

> The Academy's made it easier. The services are so close and you can go whenever you want. A lot of my friends are Jewish that I've met through the club; it's just made it easier – made it easier to be religious.
>
> (1/C, Non-Christian)

> I think one of the bigger things religion brings here is community…
>
> (1/C, Non-Christian)

> I definitely became more religious after coming here; maybe not more religious in beliefs, but more observant.
>
> (1/C, Non-Christian)

An Atheist shed some insight into the realm of the out-group of non-practicing midshipmen with his comment about the times when the religious midshipmen are attending services. His lack of practice, while it doesn't supply the support group noted by the religious midshipmen, provides him with a different type of support - time.

> I really don't have a religious belief or affiliation. It helped me out too during plebe summer because when everyone was off at church I was folding laundry and getting ready for the upcoming week…It hasn't really affected me at all.
>
> (2/C, Non-Christian)

The most diverse comment during the discussions was from a 1/C that identifies himself as a non-religious Jew. This 1/C identifies as a minority similar to female and black midshipmen. The literature supports the idea that religion can be immediately associated with diversity and minorities, but contemporary research focuses on gender and race versus religion. This 1/C offers a testament in support of the literature.

> The affiliation I have is that I am the token Jew in my company. Not good or bad, just a fact, along with other minorities, along with the females in the hall, or the black midshipmen; it creates a certain attention.
>
> (1/C, Non-Christian)

4. Examples of Acceptance or Non-Acceptance

At this point in the focus group discussions the respondents got to the heart of issues concerning tolerance and acceptance. Examples are given by many respondents that have witnessed cases of intolerance. Further explanations of the illustrative examples were often found in the respondents' essays'. The explanations of the examples are insightful into the subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) intolerances that occur inside the Brigade, are sometimes considered part of the accepted culture, and are often out of sight from anyone that does not live in Bancroft Hall.

a. *Personal/Direct Examples*

Examples offered by accounts citing personal experiences with acceptance or non-acceptance were discussed during this sub-question. Most respondents spoke of personal examples, roommates, or close friends.

Additionally, positive examples of acceptance and understanding were given by many respondents. While most focus group members immediately responded to the negative aspect of the question and, consequently, focused on intolerance as their subject of discussion, some respondents were quick to react with examples of understanding. A balance existed between respondents who illustrated positive examples of tolerance and some who illustrated negative examples of intolerance portraying a wide array of tolerance and acceptance issues that occur within Bancroft Hall. The following quotation portrays the idea of understanding and acceptance of a fellow midshipman's beliefs and the level of understanding held by this specific 1/C respondent; this respondent notes accepting behavior towards his pious roommate who disapproves of inappropriate female photographs:

> We had a screen saver up with all these pretty girls in bikinis and my roommate will say 'sorry Dave' and turn it off. I think people will go out of their way to make him feel comfortable. I think that is true throughout the Brigade that I think people will go the extra step to make people feel comfortable.

(1/C, Christian)

While some roommates appear understanding as illustrated in the above quotation, other roommates may not be as understanding. The 2/C quoted below voiced shock and disappointment in his roommate's behavior when talking negatively about his

religion. While tolerance does not appear to be an issue, acceptance of a roommate's feelings about his beliefs was misunderstood. The two quotations below offer evidence that misunderstanding and a lack of acceptance is not only found between the out-group and the in-group, but examples were given by respondents providing evidence of in-group to in-group intolerance and lack of acceptance between majority religions (i.e. Catholicism and Protestantism).

> My roommate…is going through the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) program (for his upcoming marriage) and my other roommate who is Catholic voiced his concern about converting to Catholicism. There was kind of a resentment at how Catholics are so strong in their beliefs…I felt that it wasn't my choice to be Catholic when I was raised but I grew very fond of it and the fact that he was being…negative about it – I wasn't offended but I was taken aback.

> (2/C, Christian)

> My roommate has been ostracized a bit because he was born and raised Church of Christ… and is completely legalistic about it… and has no problem voicing his opinion to other people in the company if they've done something immoral and his morals are based on his religious beliefs. My company was doing a march-over and a couple of guys were singing a song in the back and it was a song that had some vulgar lyrics and he approached them when we got back and told them "that was completely inappropriate…and I think that maybe causes your ability to be commissioned into question."

> (2/C, Christian)

In terms of adjustment and acceptance, this 1/C recognized a period of adjustment during his earlier time at the Academy. The period of which he spoke was one of understanding why many midshipmen were open and verbose about their religious beliefs. Tolerance and acceptance of religion, religiosity, and associated views appear prerequisites to functioning within the culture of the Brigade upon arrival as a midshipman at the Naval Academy.

> …I've never met so many people that were so open, they are not fanatical, but most open people in terms of sharing what they believe and I've learned that's how people are, and it probably bothered me when I got here. I don't think that it is a bad thing, but it was uncomfortable at first, but you learn to accept what people think.

> (1/C, Non-Christian)

Considered one of the strange and unusual religions at the Academy according to a majority of respondents, Mormonism was discussed in detail with a certain level of mystery and intrigue. Apparently, Mormons are truly and completely lumped into the out-group and most respondents simply did not understand the religion and were reluctant to befriend those that followed said religion. Even if the Mormon midshipman is social and provides little outward evidence of his faith, midshipmen appear wary according to some respondents.

> My roommate right now, he's an exchanger, and he is coming in from Air Force, and he's Mormon. I've noticed some guys from my company seem to avoid him…they just don't know what to make of him. He drinks, he goes out and parties, but still, people hear he is Mormon and they are like, 'oh, that is strange.'

<div align="right">(2/C, Non-Christian)</div>

b.   Second-Hand/Indirect Examples

Discussions about acquaintances, classmates, and company-mates were promoted by this sub-question. The relationship between the respondent and the subject of discussion was less concrete than the relationships in the previous part of this question. In other words, the subject was often a company mate or group of classmates that the respondents noticed some spurious behavior. The examples are as insightful but not as clearly illustrated as those in the previous discussion. Often larger religious groups vice individuals were discussed as the receivers of intolerance or non-acceptance.

Seen by the Christians as a fringe religious group, Jewish midshipmen received multiple comments from the Christian respondents pertaining to acts of intolerance. Assessing the separation of the focus groups by Christian and Non-Christian, it is interesting that the Christians note the intolerance towards Jews, Mormons, and other minority religious groups more often than the respondents from those out-groups. The following quotation explains behavior towards a Jewish midshipman who practiced his faith daily. Instead of being met with interest, understanding, and acceptance, the 1/C notes a reaction of intolerance.

> For somebody I know, he was a Jewish midshipman, everyone kind of viewed him as the Jewish midshipman. He wore his yarmulke everyday and was ostracized for that fact – that he was wearing his yarmulke; that he was different in that regard. I could see that he just wasn't accepted like everyone else.

<div align="right">(1/C, Christian)</div>

Additionally, another 1/C notes behavior towards Jewish midshipmen to contain religious intolerance through playful banter.

> …it seems like Jewish kids get picked on a bit more – not picked on, but they don't want to pay for something, like that's too much for wardroom dues or something – they'll even say it themselves, that 'I'm being Jewish.'

<div align="right">(1/C, Christian)</div>

Further discussion about the in-group's behavior towards Jewish midshipmen led this 1/C to begin to understand why and how a Jewish midshipman would feel uncomfortable from the playful banter. The 1/C also offers a comment reticent of earlier commentary about similar backgrounds versus different personalities. Judaism is noted as similar but different, therefore, the 1/C understands why the Jews would be treated differently.

> …People joke about it (being Jewish), but if you were that person you may feel uncomfortable, but I've never seen someone completely ostracized… It does happen more often in the Jewish faith mainly because it is different – it is somewhat in common, but different.

<div align="right">(1/C, Christian)</div>

The in-group is often unable to understand how or why discussion about personal issues such as religious affiliation would negatively impact or upset the out-group. Playful banter through comments about beliefs and religiosity is often seen by the in-group as playful, but seen by the out-group as unnecessary, inappropriate, or, in some extreme cases, insulting.

> We have a 2/C in my company that is Jewish and there are a few people that tease him, but I think most of those people are his friends, and it is in a good natured way.

<div align="right">(2/C, Christian)</div>

<div align="center">47</div>

…couple of Jewish kids in my company, it like 'oh you have different beliefs and different holidays.' Playful joking but no non-acceptance.

<div align="right">(2/C, Christian)</div>

Another fringe religion, Mormonism was often discussed by the 1/C Christians as an odd, strange, and almost mysterious religion. The 1/C Christians note on several occasions that they cannot understand Mormonism.

I keep going back to Mormons. 'Oh, strange, funny Mormons – look at them, they're not drinking…' I think it is just because we don't understand it at all so much. But it is harmless fun.

<div align="right">(1/C, Christian)</div>

Somewhat off topic, one midshipman notes how religious affiliation affects the classroom environment. Favoritism because of religiosity was a subject that wasn't specifically discussed or polled by any of the focus group questions. However, this 1/C decided it was important to note unfair behavior that he observed because of religiosity.

The practice and belief of the professor and the student, in this 1/C Christian's perspective, appears to affect the fair treatment of two different midshipmen in similar situations.

I've seen people almost favored for it…For instance, there was a person in one of my classes who went to church with the Prof, knew the Prof's family, and was given an extension on the project. Someone else that asked the Prof for an extension was not given it. When they would [meet in] class, they would talk about 'good to see you this weekend…'

<div align="right">(1/C, Christian)</div>

5.   **Additional Verbal Commentary about Religion's Role at USNA**

The closing question was an attempt to probe the respondents for any further information they may have omitted or thought of after a question was already past. Opening the discussion to commentary or further explanation of former statements at the close of the focus group sessions worked well because the respondents were, for the most part, more at ease with the ongoing discussion and each other. Inhibitions and communication barriers were dismantled during the fifty minutes of discussion preceding this question so answers were often more blunt and descriptive.

Some comments were made about how midshipmen practice their faith during times when other midshipmen are attending mandatory events. The concept of volunteer event versus mandatory event is extraordinarily pronounced in the military context at the Naval Academy. Midshipmen see volunteer events as a reprieve or a reward for hard work. Mandatory events fall into routine and are often associated with punishment if the event is not part of the "daily grind."

Interestingly, comments were often made by Christians about midshipmen taking advantage of religious programs to escape mandatory events during the Naval Academy's daily routine. Christian groups hold the most ECA events that offer breaks for midshipmen from the "daily grind." Comments were made about out-group and in-group use of the CRP supported and ECA associated religious group meetings throughout plebe summer and the school year. Some respondents do not view these meetings as efforts of support but as an escape from mandatory Academy events.

> Is there a limit on the number of times you can attend a noon meal service during the week? If they went to a normal school they wouldn't go that often during the week. They use it to get out of stuff they have.

> (1/C, Christian)

> During plebe summer Jewish services were on Friday nights and we had two or three people convert to being Jewish that would go to services – that were not Jewish. They would go to the service – one of them I know stayed Jewish.

> (1/C, Christian)

Reacting to an apparently religious motivated act of intolerance, this 1/C offered his experience with a company-mate who decided to make inappropriate open comments about his disagreement with homosexuality. As discussed earlier, homosexuality and midshipmen that accept homosexuality are seen as unacceptable and intolerable by mainstream midshipmen.

Guy during plebe summer was sending out weekly e-mails of motivational bible verses. He harped on different issues that were political in nature rather than uplifting – especially about gay issues: like they're sinners and they're all going to hell. This is not appropriate…God will be there in the trouble times. Don't say he will also smite your brother who happens to be gay.

(1/C, Christian)

The Non-Christians offered some insightful closing remarks about the religious culture at the Naval Academy. For many of the Non-Christian respondents it took longer for them to warm up to the discussion and offer honest and constructive commentary. The final focus group question acted as a catch-all for these specific respondents.

I've had more comments made about religious things at the Academy than I did in high school, and I went to an all-guy Catholic school and I was the only Jew in the entire school.

(1/C, Non-Christian)

…I think that you definitely hear jokes and stuff, but I don't think it is out of hate, it's just jokes, and it depends on how you take it.

(1/C, Non-Christian)

There are jokes all of the time…They (the in-group) take a stereotype, the one thing they know about your religion, and they're just gonna throw it out there as something funny, and you shouldn't take offense to it; it's just they're poking fun because that's the only think they know to poke fun at, so, 'haha.' You're just gonna go on with life.

(1/C, Non-Christian)

Summarizing the entire discussion, respondents offered the following statements indicating their feelings about the Naval Academy's religious culture. The overwhelming reaction by all respondents is that the overall religious culture at the Naval Academy is supportive, accepting, and comfortable, and necessary for future professionals of warfare.

Often times in mainstream society you see a lack of acceptance of people who are particularly devout in their beliefs and there's an emphasis on secularism where I think the Academy does a much better job saying, 'if you have no affiliation that is great, and I don't really care, but if you do have these beliefs we're going to do out best to allow you to exercise them and no one is really going to judge you because of that…'

(2/C, Non-Christian)

Religion at the Academy seems to be a very personal thing and it is known that in the military, religion is somewhat tied to the job. The dangerous aspect of it can draw people towards religion, as well as other hardships like being away from loved ones.

(1/C, Christian)

Many events involving midshipmen begin and end with a prayer of some kind. This tightly binds religion to many of the naval traditions that take place at USNA. This directly influences the culture at the USNA.

(1/C, Christian)

6.   Three-Minute Essay Responses

The three-minute essay was designed to offer a final, non-verbal, method to express any examples of intolerance not described during the discussion. While some examples were repeated by respondents and some respondents had nothing further to add, a few respondents offered fresh illustrative examples of acts of religious intolerance by midshipmen. The essay question was the final part of the focus group and members were dismissed following their completion of the essay. The fresh examples of intolerance are presented below.

I have seen cases where my peers have displayed some form of intolerance. These cases involved intolerance towards homosexuality and the enemy (Al Queda, etc.). I am not sure that stems from religious beliefs or not.

(1/C, Christian)

…I know I have seen people laughed at for their faiths; especially in regards to the Christian ECA's. Some people (midshipmen), although few in number, find the Christian ECA's humorous and foolish. This is evident by little comments or actions I have observed over the years.

(1/C, Christian)

…I overheard one person talking to another and accused Christians in general of being some of the most intolerant people. Another time someone commented that he could not understand any intelligent person believing in Creation.

(2/C, Christian)

A member of the class of 2005 in my company…did not believe in any real form of a supreme being. He would tell the plebes during plebe summer…not to rely on religious beliefs but to find your motivation from a personal development standpoint. He was the 1st semester training

officer and would talk to the plebes at Blue and Gold and tell them things that I felt offended by. They ranged from comments relating to not being religious in personal development to indications and implied statements that their thoughts were wrong.

(2/C, Christian)

I've seen various instances where Jewish-related jokes or comments have been made.

(2/C, Christian)

The only case I've seen of "religious intolerance" is guys making stupid jokes about Jews or whatever; it happens in the same context as racist jokes happen – they're told as a result of a kind of backlash to an over [sensitivity].

(2/C, Christian)

I had a roommate plebe year who, through his ignorance of my faith, tried to call me down for what he felt I believed…it was a little more offensive than intended. We were able to talk it over later and reconcile differences…

(1/C, Non-Christian)

I did hear from a very close Jewish friend that she had gone to her first Catholic mass here where the head guy from somewhere came. At some point during the sermon the speaker said something about how he didn't understand why the Jews couldn't just accept Jesus - a little unsettling to hear.

(1/C, Non-Christian)

An alarming quotation because of the implications of abusive behavior by fellow midshipmen, the following comment comes from a midshipman that was raised Christian and considers himself non-religious. His father's family is Jewish and when his roommates found out about this they began verbally abusing him. The respondent was forced to move out of his room in order to escape the verbal abuse.

Two former roommates used to joke about my Jewish heritage on one side of my family. I am not religious or Jewish in faith. For a period of two months or so [the verbal attacks were] motivated by my Jewish background.

(2/C, Non-Christian)

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The most intense illustrative example offered by a respondent during this essay question because of the implication of violence was the following quotation:

> …I experienced it one day while walking between classes…I overheard people talking about the watch that was posted [at the Levy center]. The comment was something to the effect of, 'Who cares if there is a person standing watch? Are they trying to stop people from bombing it? Who cares if they bomb the Jew center? They shouldn't have their own building anyway.'

(1/C, Non-Christian)

7. Summary of Focus Group Themes

Overarching themes were presented by the respondents throughout the focus group discussions. Reconciling these themes through content coding and examination of illustrative examples helps define the overarching themes and provides insight into the total subject matter discussed by all respondents versus specific focus group discussions. Five overarching themes are discussed in the following section.

a. *The Model Midshipman*

The first overarching theme presented by the focus group discussions is that there exists for the focus group members a model midshipman that respondents perceive as a person within the Brigade that exemplifies the qualities and attributes of a "perfect" midshipman. The "perfect" midshipman is in part a white Anglo-Saxon Christian male. Therefore, any midshipman that does not immediately fit easily within this perceived mold is considered different. Ergo, an out-group is defined by the majority of midshipmen. The Christian and Non-Christian respondents concurred with the perceived model midshipman.

b. *Unusual Beliefs, Homophobia, and Racism*

Further discussion challenged the respondents to reconcile the model midshipman concept with the reality of diversity at the Naval Academy. Unusual beliefs were discussed with some beliefs, such as atheism, labeled as "strange." Of note, the subject of homophobia and a lack of acceptance of midshipmen who tolerate homosexuality was discussed. Religious conservatism was blamed as the source for intolerance towards homosexuality and those who tolerate it. Additionally, racist feelings

towards persons of Middle-Eastern descent were discussed. The feelings of racism were blamed on the current war against terror, a lack of understanding of Islamic beliefs, and faulty education properly explaining the Islamic religion.

c.   *Comfortable Emphasis on Religion*

Overall, the feeling from almost all respondents was that the Naval Academy places an appropriate amount of emphasis on religion. Religious education, availability for different beliefs, CRP support, and an overall environment that celebrates and supports religiosity describes the Academy culture according to respondents. The current Superintendent was specifically noted as promoting religiosity and support and acceptance of those who choose to practice their respective faiths. The respondents, including those that stated there is more religion than expected at a public institution, all appeared comfortable with the amount of religion viewed as part of the Academy's culture.

d.   *Support during Stress*

All religious respondents and some of the non-religious respondents concurred that the CRP offers a tremendous amount of support during stressful times. Whether friends, religion, or structure were mentioned as the supporting factors, most respondents discussed the importance and significance of support offered by religious programs at the Naval Academy.

e.   *Illustrative Examples of Intolerance*

Lastly, an overarching theme is intolerance discussed by over 75% of respondents. Before beginning this study, it was assumed that there would be few illustrative examples of intolerance offered by respondents. The illustrative examples provided insight into how many respondents have personally dealt with, witnessed, or are aware of cases concerning acts of religious intolerance. The examples offered are windows into the daily culture interactions with respect to religious tolerance and acceptance within Bancroft Hall and the Brigade of midshipmen.

V. SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. SUMMARY

This exploratory focus group study addressed how religious values and practices impact adjustment and feelings of acceptance at the U.S. Naval Academy. Eight focus groups were held with a total of twenty-four volunteer participants from among first and second class midshipmen of various religious backgrounds. The respondents engaged in discussion and completed written exercises including a three-minute essay and a background survey. Transcripts were content coded and themes were identified. The overarching themes provided a qualitative view into the religious culture within the Brigade of midshipmen from the perspective of a small convenience sample of respondents. Although informative, the reliability of resulting themes from the focus groups should be further verified with additional study using a larger and representative sample. A summary and discussion of the respondents' views are presented along with each original research question.

1. Do Religious Values and Practices Impact a Midshipman's Adjustment and Personal Feelings of Acceptance at the U.S. Naval Academy, and, if so, How?

Consistent with the literature, respondents found that the support structure offered by the Command Religious Program (CRP) during times of stress, the sense of family that develops among fellow midshipmen through participation in religious extra-curricular activities (ECA's), and the personal motivation and inspiration found in faith during times of struggle, are imperative to success at the Naval Academy. Even the secular respondents noted the strong support structure offered by the CRP and religious ECA's; both prove beneficial to helping midshipmen during their time at the Academy.

Values and practices, referred to as personal religiosity throughout this study, impacted each respondent albeit differently. Religiosity affects feelings of acceptance within the Brigade and helps or hinders adjustment for some respondents. As discussed in response to the question below, majority religious group respondents were better accepted than their minority counterparts.

2. Are Specific Religions More or Less Accepted? If so, How Does This Influence Experiences as a Midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy?

According to respondents, Mormons, Atheists, and Agnostics are the least accepted minority faiths. Lack of belief is seen by the respondents as strange, odd, and, to a certain degree, unacceptable. The secular respondents did not specifically mention any acts of intolerance, but they were well aware that their lack of belief in a deity was viewed as weird to their peers.

Additionally, Jews and Muslims received a great deal of negative commentary. The negative commentary was evident in the illustrative examples that discussed feelings of racism towards midshipmen of Middle-Eastern descent and a lack of understanding for beliefs and practices of both Jews and Muslims. Feelings of racism are based upon respondents' discussion about the War against Terrorism and ignorance of the Muslim faith. A lack of religious diversity education and poor immersion was blamed for the respondents' low level of understanding for the Jewish and Muslim religions. Multiple illustrative examples were offered referring to acts and feelings of intolerance and an overt lack of acceptance within the Brigade's culture for minority religions and the practice of those religions.

The literature cautions that the minority, also referred to as the out-group, may experience and be the target of acts and feelings of intolerance – whether based on religion, sexual preference, gender, or race. The religious majority had few if any experiences with acts or feelings of intolerance. The religious minority, however, did offer examples of acts or feelings of intolerance. Interestingly, the religious majority often commented about acts or feelings of religious intolerance that they noticed was directed towards the religious minority. Therefore, all respondents are aware of acts and feelings of intolerance towards certain minorities.

3. Do Midshipmen Feel Constrained (Negatively Impacted) by Religious Values or Practices at the Naval Academy?

Overall, no respondent felt constrained by the religious culture at the Naval Academy. From secular to devout Christian, the respondents supported the CRP and felt supported by the CRP. Additionally, respondents felt that religious education is important for their futures as naval officers in positions of leadership. While the religious

culture is noted as overt and highly supported by the current Superintendent of the Naval Academy, all respondents believe the program is balanced, effective, and understanding of the diversity within the Brigade.

The literature supports the need for religious programs at a developmental institution during a student's college years. The vast agreement that the CRP is well run by the respondents is evident that the emphasis placed upon religion by the Academy is not overwhelming and satisfies the needs and wants of religious and non-religious groups.

4. What are Feelings about Acceptance from Different Religious Groups?

The literature reports that tolerance is relatively simple to accomplish within an organization in comparison to acceptance. Tolerance is directed by the Secretary of the Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations, and the Naval Academy Superintendent's policy directives about behavior toward different religious groups. However, as Schein (1999) discusses in his book about corporate culture, acceptance is a personal choice informed by an organization's culture.

Furthermore, issues of acceptance were consistently addressed through the illustrative examples offered by the respondents. Discussions about acts and feelings portraying a lack of acceptance toward certain practices, beliefs, religions, and races indicate that respondents from different religious groups have different acceptance issues. For example, respondents from some religious backgrounds expressed not only homophobia towards homosexuals but lack of acceptance towards those who accept homosexuality. Respondents indicated that there is a problem with acceptance of midshipmen of Middle-Eastern descent. Furthermore, intolerance towards secular midshipmen and jokes made about other religious minorities are examples of a culture that tacitly supports a lack of acceptance.

5. Is a Lack of Religious Affiliation Related to Midshipmen Feeling Ostracized?

The respondents did not feel ostracized within the Brigade. While, acts or feelings of intolerance were offered during the discussion, ostracizing acts by groups or individuals were never discussed.

B.   DISCUSSION

The literature reviewed for this study indicates that religious diversity within the United States, the military, and institutions like the Naval Academy is ever-increasing. The freedom the Constitution documents as a right for all mankind, and the growing influence of spirituality outside of the typical mortar and concrete church walls, has spawned a national interest in personal religious development. The U.S. Naval Academy is not shielded from the growth of religiosity both on an institutional and individual scale.

Military and Academy policies support acceptance and tolerance within the Brigade of midshipmen. The examples offered by the focus group respondents are, however, contrary to policy and outward appearance. According to some respondents, behavior towards religious and other minorities is not always consistent with a culture espousing acceptance. Respondents spoke of racism, homophobia, and specifically, intolerance towards religious minorities. The in-group of midshipmen consists of those within the Brigade that closely resemble the model midshipman discussed in the focus group results. Therefore, white, Anglo-Saxon, Christian, conservative Republican males are members of the in-group while minorities differing in race, gender, or creed are members of the out-group. Members of the in-group and the out-group have witnessed or been victims of religious intolerance toward the latter at an institution with an exceptional command religious program (CRP) and religious support structure.

Respondents feel comfortable with the CRP and religious culture at the Naval Academy. The individual examples of religious intolerance are not specifically associated with the CRP or religious culture. However, according to respondents, a culture appears to exist that tacitly supports, or at the very least does not condemn or combat, acts or feelings of religious intolerance.

As predicted from the literature, many midshipmen respondents became more religious during their time at the Academy. The developmental stage through which many midshipmen navigate during their path to adulthood during their college years promotes increased levels of religiosity. Involvement with different religious groups polarized some respondents' opinions towards other Academy religious activities.

According to respondents, conflicts, either overt or covert, between CRP sponsored groups sometimes arise ultimately making midshipmen more sensitive to feelings or acts of intolerance.

Further, proximity of and availability to religious programs, the support structure offered by the CRP and the associated membership, and the stressful Naval Academy environment culminate into increased practice and participation by religious midshipmen of all faiths. The increased religious diversity within the Brigade has increased the number of religious ECA's. As diversity increases without diversity education, intolerance may become more of a pronounced issue. However, because fitting into the Academy as a "shipmate" is such an important part of being a member of the Brigade, intolerance is often overlooked. This thesis helped capture examples of overlooked acts of intolerance and recognized examples of unacceptable behavior by midshipmen. Members of the in-group and out-group must understand that acts of intolerance and a lack of acceptance because of religious beliefs are not acceptable within the Brigade of midshipmen.

Additionally, respondents' religiosity appeared in many forms. While respondents identified themselves as Jews, Catholics, Baptists, etc., no single faith group identified with the same or, in most cases, even similar feelings about religion, the religious culture at the Academy, or other associated subjects. Individuals of the same faiths were as different in their views and feelings as individuals of different faiths. Focus group respondents did not uncover or suggest any serious or egregious affronts to religious tolerance. However, there is anecdotal evidence that biases and prejudices remain especially with regard to atypical or unusual groups such as atheists, agnostics, and Mormons. Further, based on religious teaching, some respondents found it acceptable to express sentiments against homosexuality. The message of tolerance had not penetrated some emotional reactions and there exists undertones of intolerance regarding certain diversity issues.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

Integration and tolerance of different religions, beliefs and practices are not often a problem according to focus group respondents. However, complete acceptance is a definable issue within the Brigade according to focus group respondents. Just as women

continue to battle for acceptance in some pockets of resistance or ignorance, so goes the same battle for acceptance for the religious out-group. On the fringe, misunderstood, and sometimes belittled, the minority religious group respondents noted case after case portraying non-acceptance by their peers within the Brigade.

For the most part, the majority religious group does not notice the acceptance issues, but some majority respondents noted a lack of acceptance for the out-group, and one 2/C Christian respondent portrayed the ideal when he stated, "One of the most important things that someone can have when they come here is that they can quickly adapt to different situations and work with different types of people because not everybody here is the same…" Since the Academy cannot assume all midshipmen arrive with the adaptability noted by the 2/C respondent, solutions come in different forms. Dealing with intolerance both proactively and reactively midshipmen and staff can counsel one another about acceptable and professional behavior.

Individual and group counseling is recommended for current midshipmen in order to prevent future (and react to any current) religious intolerance issues. Understanding proper and improper behavior associated with acts of intolerance would greatly benefit the professional behavior expected from midshipmen promoting a healthier dynamic within Bancroft hall between the in-group and the out-group. Beyond informal counseling a structured diversity education curriculum might be considered.

Diversity education can reach a larger audience than counseling and offer a structured and preventative means to help develop a better culture of acceptance and understanding. A large number of respondents noted the importance of understanding diverse backgrounds and beliefs because of their future leadership responsibilities. There is a desire from the respondents for increased education, the results from which could greatly improve the dynamic between the majority and minority groups within Bancroft Hall.

Additionally, there were some respondents who were aware other religions existed within the Brigade but could not identify a Non-Christian. Diversity education would be most helpful for these individuals who will assume positions of management

and leadership over men and women who are not all part of the mainstream. The goal for diversity education is conceptually moving beyond tolerance and teaching acceptance.

The Brigade must go beyond tolerance and focus on acceptance of all religious groups. Tolerance is good. Integration is good. However, acceptance is necessary for every midshipman to properly adjust and maximize the benefits of a Naval Academy education. Perhaps wise beyond his years, a 1/C respondent stated the following while discussing tolerance:

> …like you see with being accepting – it's got to go beyond tolerance. This place is more than just an undergraduate institution. We're trying to emulate, to a certain degree, life out in the fleet – there's going to be all different types of people, like you have here, but even more so – people out in the fleet will be more different than they are here, so I think you have to understand those that you're leading; [it] is critical – accepting not just tolerating.

(1/C, Non-Christian)

Going beyond tolerance should be a mantra for leaders. Accepting diversity and, therefore, maximizing strengths attained from a diverse organization. Acceptance education may be attained from exposure training where midshipmen interact with members of different backgrounds and are introduced to belief systems dissimilar from their own. Recognizing and realizing the strength and breadth of diversity within the Brigade could be a great acceptance building experience. Further research will assist in the development and institution of programs such as diversity education.

This thesis provides only a brief look at religious issues identified by participants from the Brigade. Further research into related topics is suggested and encouraged. The purpose of this study was to assess the feelings of acceptance and adjustment issues associated with members of different religious groups within the Brigade of midshipmen.

From the literature review and from focus group results regarding issues of acceptance and adjustment, an idea for future research comes to the fore. A more quantitative study into the in-group versus out-group dynamic within the Brigade of midshipmen is warranted. Surveying in-group and out-group perceptions about diversity within the Brigade may help establish a base of educational objectives to assist with diversity education for a better dynamic between diverse groups.

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APPENDIX

A. FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

A) Let's talk about adjusting to life as a midshipman at the US Naval Academy?

- What kinds of people and with what characteristics fit in best? [get examples]

- What views and values are important? [get examples]

- Begin Index Card Activity 1

B) How important is religion in the culture or climate of the US Naval Academy?

- What beliefs/religions are dominant? (accepted) [get examples]

- What beliefs are unusual? (less accepted) [get examples]

- Is there too much emphasis on religion at the USNA? Is there too little?

- Being Index Card Activity 2

C) How has your religious affiliation at USNA impacted you as a midshipman?

- Begin Round Table Activity

D) Can you give examples of how you or others have you been accepted or ostracized?

- By peers?

- By the command (which includes instructors and staff)?

- By the leadership (the chain of command)?

E) Would you care to add anything further to the discussion that you think would help to understand the role of religion at USNA?

3 minute essay - Have you had any case where you have experienced, felt you have experienced, or witnessed any sort of religious intolerance from other service members, faculty, or staff; senior, peer, or subordinate, would you please explain (borrowed from Adam Goldberg's NPS approved survey for Jewish military officers)?

B. RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND SURVEY

Focus Group Letter: _____   **ID Number:** _____

1) Of the following, which do you consider to be your religion (please check one):

☐ Baptist   ☐ Muslim

☐ Buddhist   ☐ Protestant

☐ Catholic   ☐ Non-denominational Christian

☐ Episcopalian   ☐ Secular/no religious affiliation

☐ Hindu   ☐ Other _____

☐ Jewish   e.g. Atheist, Wiccan, etc.

2) Using the scale describe how religious (devout) you consider yourself?

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Not religious at all · Moderately religious · Extremely religious

3) To what degree do you "practice" your religion?

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Not observant at all · Somewhat observant · Extremely observant

4) How many times a week do you meet with a religious group or attend religious services (please check one)?:

☐ zero (0)

☐ one (1)

☐ two (2)

☐ three or more (≥3)

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